

Arizona eLearning Taskforce

Minutes of the Meeting Thursday, October 18, 2007 10:00am – 12:00pm Arizona Department of Education Conference Room 417

Members Present:

DJ Harper – Representing Chris Cummiskey
Theodore Kraver
Sandi Grandberry
Rod Lenniger

Debra Lorenzen
Mark Nichols
Cathy Poplin, Chair

Members Not Present:

Lisa Long
Joseph O'Reilly
Casey Loman
Rosalina Escandon

Handouts:

- Agenda for October 18, 2007
- August 10, 2007 Meeting Minutes
- September 14, 2007 Meeting Minutes
- The Evolution of the Mesa Distance Learning Program – Terry Hutchings & Jennifer Echols, with Mesa Distance Learning
- DRAFT Application to Participate – eLearning Pilot SB1512 Middle School Math Project – Cathy Poplin
- eLearning Taskforce Meeting Dates for 2007-2008
- eLearning Taskforce Members and Terms
- 2007 National Leadership Development and Strategic Planning Symposium on K-16 Science Education for State Teams – Cathy Poplin
- 2008 Summary of Seed Funding to Launch Critical Elements of eSATS – Theodore Kraver
- eSATS Redesign Report October 2007 “A Work in Progress” – Theodore Kraver

Welcome and Introductions – (The meeting is recorded on tape and available for full review.)

Cathy Poplin called the meeting to official order at 10:05am. A quorum was determined. Cathy introduced Mark Nichols, the newly appointed ELTF member. Mark is representing the Speaker of the House. Mark is an expert on K-12 and 21st Century Learning. Cathy asked the ELTF members to introduce themselves and give a brief update.

Mark began the introductions by briefly giving his background and area of his expertise. Mark was a classroom teacher in several different states, the technology director for a small reservation school district, taught at ASU West and worked with Apple, Inc. Mark has been in Arizona for the past 12 years.

Rod Lenniger introduced himself and gave a report from the Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications (WCET) to Cathy Poplin to review. The coop is funded by the William and

Flora Hewlett and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundations. The coop's mission is to promote and advance the effective use of technology in higher education. Their website provides useful software for eLearning, <http://www.wcet.info/home.asp> . All of Arizona's state universities and University of Phoenix are members. This may be an organization the ADE and ELTF may be interested in joining.

Theodore Kraver updated the ELTF on the eSATS Redesign Report for October 2007. Ted also gave each member present a summary of the 2008 funding and legislation of eSATS system design. As new funding for statewide eLearning adoption becomes available wise and supported decisions can be made. Oversight of this bill will be assigned to Arizona's eLearning Task Force. The eSATS website is up and running. There is a seven minute video on eLearning plan and process at the website, www.arizonaelearning.com.

Cathy Poplin gave an update from the 2007 National Leadership Development and Strategic Planning Symposium on K-16 Science Education. Cathy gave each member a copy of the agenda from the Symposium and invited questions of interest based on the agenda. She informed the ELTF that Andy Tobin from the House is very interested in providing online courses for students and suggested that he contact Mesa's Distance Learning program.

Sandi Grandberry gave a brief introduction and a brief update on distance learning in Africa. The small community uses radio broadcast to teach their distance learning on a variety of subjects. Other members present gave a brief introduction with no updates.

Approval of Minutes from August 10, 2007 & September 14, 2007

Cathy asked the ELTF members to review the meeting minutes from August 10, 2007 and September 14, 2007. ELTF members noted no changes. Sandi Grandberry made a motion to accept the minutes, Debra Lorenzen seconded the motion. Minutes were unanimously approved and will be posted.

Mesa Distance Learning Program TAPBI School – Terry Hutchins and Jennifer Echols

Cathy introduced Terry Hutchins from the Mesa Distance Learning Program/TAPBI (Technology Assisted Project Based Instruction) Schools. There are currently fourteen schools that make up the TAPBI schools; the TAPBI program is funded by the state per the TAPBI legislation. Students can attend school from home or from a computer lab; the student must complete 720 hours of instruction a year. Terry introduced himself and Jennifer Echols. Terry gave the ELTF members a copy of "The Evolution of the Mesa Distance Learning Program" handout.

When Mesa Distance Learning Program began in 1999, they used a commercial courseware. Student management and the grade book were handled by a commercial company. Data access was limited. The program was mainly used by home school students and an alternative to attending a "brick & mortar" (B&M) school. Dialog between student and teacher was done via email. Mesa Distance Learning did not and still does not advertise; all students are referred to the program by word of mouth. Their students include those with disabilities that keep them from attending a regular school on a regular basis and/or students with certain types of school phobias.

Since the beginning of the program Mesa Distance Learning has learned much about online learning and has made many changes, which include more teacher involvement, and the courseware, student management, grade book and dialog (message box) is now done in-house by Mesa. Data access is now given to the teacher, parent, administrator, counselor and lab teacher. The teacher feedback feature was added in 2007. The program is used by home schooled students, as an alternative to B&M, dual enrollment students, other urban and rural schools. The reason Mesa moved from

commercial software to in-house use was for more control of the software design and to make sure the curriculum is aligned with Arizona standards.

Online teachers receive training via in-house instruction. The length of training depends on the teacher. The student/teacher ratio depends on the subject and how much the teacher can handle. Teachers submit timesheets for pay - 90 hours a semester. Mesa currently has six full time employees (secretary, media specialist, a science specialist, math specialist, social studies specialist and an English specialist who also handles probationary students) and 30 part time teachers. All online teachers are hired on a trial basis to see how they work and fit into the program.

Terry briefly went over the different types of curriculum they provide to their students. Quarterly assessments are given at the K-6 level. A final exam is given at the end of the semester for seventh grade and above. If the student fails the final exam, they fail the course. Technical support is available for all students and teachers. The ELTF asked Terry and Jennifer how they address the issue of motivation for their students. Mesa sends out newsletters asking “are you right for distance learning”, when a student falls behind the parent is notified. One of the major motivating factors for a student is strong parental involvement and the students feel a personal connection to a teacher. Distance learning is not recommended for credit recovery. If a student is having trouble attending a regular school, distance learning may not be a good solution for that student.

The ELTF members discussed the differences between district TAPBI Schools and the charter TAPBI schools. Cathy asked the ELTF if they would now like to hear from one of the Virtual Academies. The ELTF agreed, Cathy said she would arrange it.

District/School Application for Middle School Math Pilot – Ruth Catalano & Hank Stabler

Cathy asked the ELTF members to review the draft application to participate in the Middle School Math Pilot. The draft still needs a little work. Cathy suggested that the ELTF review the application as homework and send any suggestions to Ruth Catalano before the next ELTF meeting. The ELTF members all agreed.

Update on \$1 million Instructional Technology System Pilot – Cathy Poplin

Cathy informed the ELTF that on Monday, October 22, 2007, she will be presenting the application for the \$1 million School to the State Board of Education. Cathy passed a copy of the application around to the ELTF members to review and provide any feedback.

One K-8 school will be selected to participate in this pilot project. The application is a two step process. The first step is submitting a letter of intent and answering a few basic questions. If invited to continue, the second step requires the submission of a large proposal. If a district has five schools they want to participate, each will need to submit five separate proposals. One of the basic premises of the application is that the schools interested must demonstrate they have already started the transition toward One to One computing; not just thinking about it. They also need to be at least performing or above on AZ LEARNS. The second step requires letters of commitment from all of the school support staff and teachers. The schools that apply must have their Governing Board approval and a plan of what will happen in year one, two & three.

Update on eLearning Middle School Math Pilot Project Request for Proposal – Cathy Poplin

Cathy informed the ELTF that the RFP will be ready to go out by Monday, October 22, 2007. The RFP will be distributed to the vendor list used by the Arizona Department of Education and to those who responded to the RFI. Cathy asked the ELTF members to send the email addresses for

vendors that they think may be interested in the RFP. Cathy said she will let the ELTF know when the RFP is made public.

Extension of eLearning Taskforce Terms – Cathy Poplin

Cathy explained to the terms ELTF members and provided a handout of terms. If a member started serving a one year term, they will then rotate to a three year term, and then two. If a member started with a two year term, they will rotate to one year and then three. If a member started serving a three year term, they will then rotate to a one year term and then two. Appointment to the ELTF is permanent, unless they resign. Mark Nichols will be starting out as a one year term. There are still three positions that need to be filled: one appointed by the Governor's office, one by the president of the Senate and one more from the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Beyond Middle School Math Pilot? What is next for ELTF? – Cathy Poplin

The ELTF will continue to monitor the Math Pilot Project, but once it is underway, Cathy asked what direction the ELTF would like to go? Debra Lorenzen suggested the ELTF continue to gather information about what works and what doesn't work in relation to eLearning and to make recommendations to the legislature. It was suggested to continue inviting people to provide presentations on their projects. Cathy informed the members that the taskforce has travel funds. Theodore Kraver mentioned going to the NECC conference next year. DJ Harper recommended that the ELTF develop a long term strategic plan for the state; a mission and vision statement for eLearning and the ELTF. Cathy said she will provide more information regarding developing a mission and vision statement.

Future Meeting Dates – Cathy Poplin

Cathy provided a list of future meeting dates for the ELTF. Cathy asked all members to make note of the dates. Cathy informed the ELTF that she will be out of town on November 8th, the next meeting date. Ruth Catalano will chair the meeting.

Public Testimony

No visitors were present

Adjourn

Meeting was adjourned at 12:05pm